

SOFTWARE HELP

Burning YouTube video to DVD

Q I found a video on YouTube that I thought my four-year-old granddaughter would like. I wanted to put it on the television set because my computer is in the bedroom, and it's cold up there. I used a program called Tube Sucker to download the video to my hard disk. This was in Flash Video format, so I used a program called Prism to turn it into an AVI file. I put this file on DVD using Roxio Creator, but although the disc plays fine in my PC, my Alba DVD player won't recognise it. Can I get the video to play in my DVD player?

EW Hunter, ernest.hunter@ntlworld.com

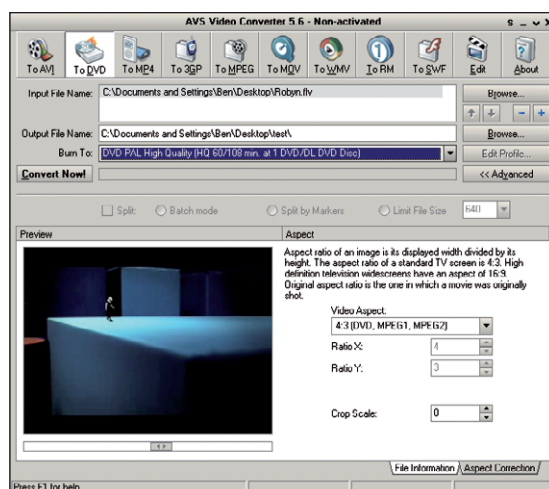
A You have already managed the hardest parts of putting a YouTube video on to a DVD – capturing the video to hard disk and converting it from the unfriendly Flash Video (.flv) format to something more widely compatible. We'd suggest that other readers use www.videodownloadx.com rather than Tube Sucker, as it doesn't require you to install any software, but Prism (www.nchsoftware.com/prism) is a straightforward, effective and free video-conversion tool.

Most DVD players are extremely fussy about the kind of video data they can play. Video must be in MPEG2 format at the correct specifications, and saved as a collection of .vob files in a folder called VIDEO_TS. Discs that conform to these requirements are known as DVD Videos. A few DVD players can also play DivX and various other files, but these models are rare.

To create a DVD Video disc, you need DVD-authoring software. These packages convert the video to the correct format and specifications and save them in a way DVD players understand, with menus you can often customise. DVD-authoring software is included with Windows Vista Home Premium and Ultimate, most video-editing software and disc-burning suites such as Nero and Roxio Creator. However, some OEM versions may exclude the required module. In Roxio, MyDVD or Copy & Convert will do the job.

Most DVD-authoring software doesn't recognise the Flash Video format, so you'll have to use Prism to convert the .flv file into a more widely supported format. The quality of YouTube videos is basic, but to avoid degrading quality further, choose a high-quality format to convert to in Prism. This will produce large files, but that doesn't matter as you can delete them after you've made your DVD. In Prism, click Encoder Options and select DV Encoder PAL (DirectShow), as this format far exceeds the quality of the original Flash Video file and can be imported into any DVD-authoring software.

If you don't have any DVD-authoring software installed, Roxio Copy & Convert 3 (*What's New, Shopper 235*) is a simple option costing just £15 from www.amazon.co.uk. Alternatively, AVS Video Converter (brought to our attention by Mr Hunter in a subsequent email) is even simpler, as it can import Flash Video files and export them as a menu-less DVD Video disc in a single step. It costs \$99 (around £49) for unlimited access to all software from www.avs4you.com. **BP**



▲ AVS Video Converter will convert from Flash Video format to DVD Video in a single step

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Kay Ewbank

Database developer and productivity expert Kay Ewbank offers help with office applications.



Ben Pitt

Professional musician and keen photographer Ben Pitt gives advice on using creative software.



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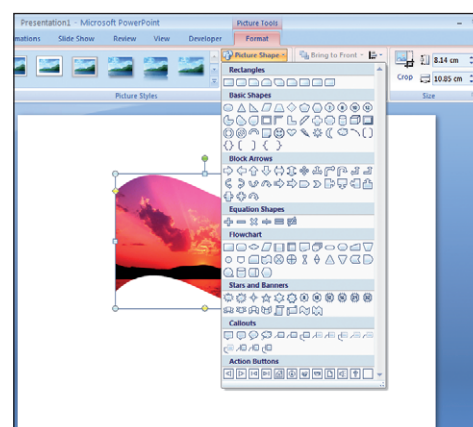
Making round images in PowerPoint

Q I'm creating a PowerPoint presentation and I want to put a JPEG image into an oval on a light-blue background. When I insert the image, it appears in a rectangle. How can I change this?

Martin Williamson

A The way you do it depends on the version of PowerPoint you're using. If you're working in a version that's pre-2007, you need to draw an oval shape, then choose Fill effects. In the dialog that appears, choose your picture from the options, then navigate through your files to the correct image.

If you're using PowerPoint 2007, just select the image you've inserted, then choose Format, Picture Shape. You can select from a wide range of possible shapes from basics through arrows, flowchart shapes, stars and banners, equations or even action buttons. **KE**



▲ PowerPoint 2007 offers a wide range of shapes for displaying images



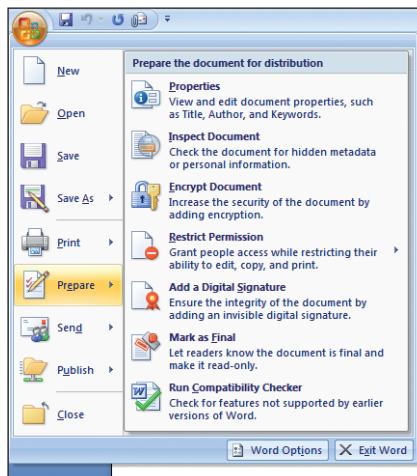
Advanced Word properties

Q I recently moved from Microsoft Office 2003 to Office 2007, and am still struggling to find a range of features in the new edition. For example, I've searched in vain for the File Properties option. You used to be able to see this quite easily in the File menu, but no longer. Has it been dropped altogether, and why has Microsoft made the new version so different?

Karen Wright

A It's still there, but you need to dig a little deeper to find it. If you look on the Office menu (the one you get to by clicking the round button at the left of the menu structure), one of the choices is Prepare. Look in the options offered in the Prepare menu and click Properties. A ribbon dialog appears where you can see (and change) settings such as author name, status, keywords, summary and comments. At the top left of this dialog, there's a drop-down button for Document Properties. If you click this, you'll get to Advanced Properties. This is where you can see the familiar old-style Document Properties dialog, allowing you to see when a document was created, how long has been spent on the editing and so on.

While it's a bit of a pain having to work through to get to the document properties, the



▲ Use the Prepare menu to get documents ready for sharing with other people in Word 2007

Prepare menu has some useful settings. For example, there's an option to check a document for hidden or personal data. Remember, Word often leaves in information that you'd rather not send to other people, as it can be viewed and embarrass you. The Prepare menu also lets you add digital signatures, mark the document to be read only, and otherwise get your document ready for sending to other people. **KE**

How do I fix my Outlook contacts?

Q I've recently moved to Outlook 2007, and have imported my contact folders from Outlook 2003. I keep the details of different types of contact in different folders for personal convenience. In Outlook 2003, when I created a new email I could choose the names from whichever folder I wanted, but in Outlook 2007 only the names in the main Contacts folder appear.

How do I get the names in the other folders to show up?

Emma Johnson

A You need to make sure your Contacts folders are set to be email address books. Right-click on one of the folders that isn't showing up and, from the menu that appears, select Properties. In the dialog that appears, go to the tab labelled Outlook Address Book, and make sure there's a tick in the 'Show this folder as an e-mail address book' box. You should now find that this list of contacts is available for selection when you're creating emails. **KE**

Sorting names randomly

Q As competition secretary for a local bowls club, I would like to be able to pick out players randomly from the entries in a spreadsheet. At the moment, I list the names on an Excel spreadsheet and re-sort to mimic the effect of choosing numbers from a hat. After randomly sorting the numbers, I can pick the pairs by having the first two players named playing each other, and so on.

I remember I could produce a random list when working in DOS, a long time ago.

David Brown

A The simple answer is to add a column to hold the random numbers, and put a formula in it that reads:

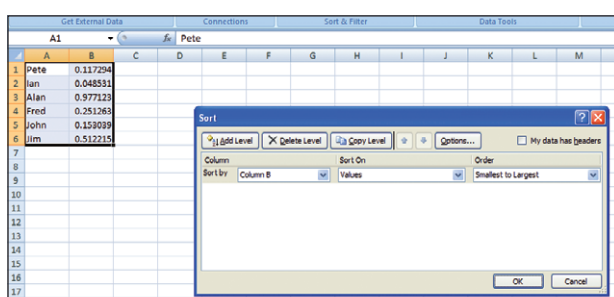
= RAND()

Copy this formula for each row that holds a player's name. You can then sort the data into order, using the random numbers column for

the sort order, and including the player's name column or columns in the selection that you want to sort.

One thing that might be confusing is that when you sort, Excel re-calculates the RAND function, so when you look at the sorted list it won't appear as though the range has been sorted correctly. This isn't important to what you want to do, as the list will have been correctly put into a random order. If you need to show the order (to avoid accusations of fiddling the pairings, say) then you will need to convert the random numbers generated by the RAND function from formulae to values before doing the sort. To do this, select the column containing the RAND formulae and then use Edit, Copy followed by Edit, Paste Special, Values. You'll then be able to sort the data into order and show that it was indeed sorted correctly according to random values.

To sort data into order, use Data, Sort and specify that you want to sort into order on the column holding the random numbers. **KE**



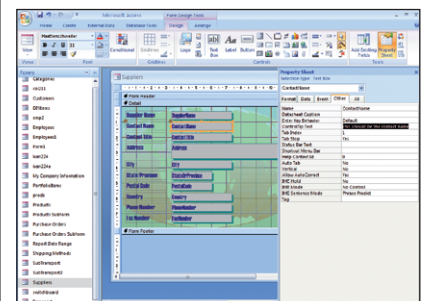
◀ Sort names into a random order by using the RAND function then Data, Sort

Contextual help in Access

Q I've created an Access database and my main entry form has a number of buttons on it. If a user hovers above a button, I'd like to be able to display some text showing them what that button does. How can I do this?

M. Coulson

A The easiest solution is to set the button's ControlTip Text property. This means that when the user moves their mouse over the button, the text will appear in the traditional pop-up help format. This method works no matter what kind of control you're working with. This means you can also, for example, show helpful tips for what type of data should be entered into a particular text box. **KE**



▲ Set the ControlTip Text property to show help for controls on forms in Access

Using Cubase SE to record live guitars

Q I'm using Cubase SE to record myself playing guitar along to MIDI backing tracks, but I'm having a problem when I try to edit the live guitar takes. I've found the Snap button that makes recordings line up with the beginning of the bar when I move them to a different track or position. However, if I've trimmed the beginning of the recording to get rid of unwanted sounds, lining them up with the beginning of the bar makes them play out of time. Is it possible to move a recording while maintaining its timing with the other instruments?

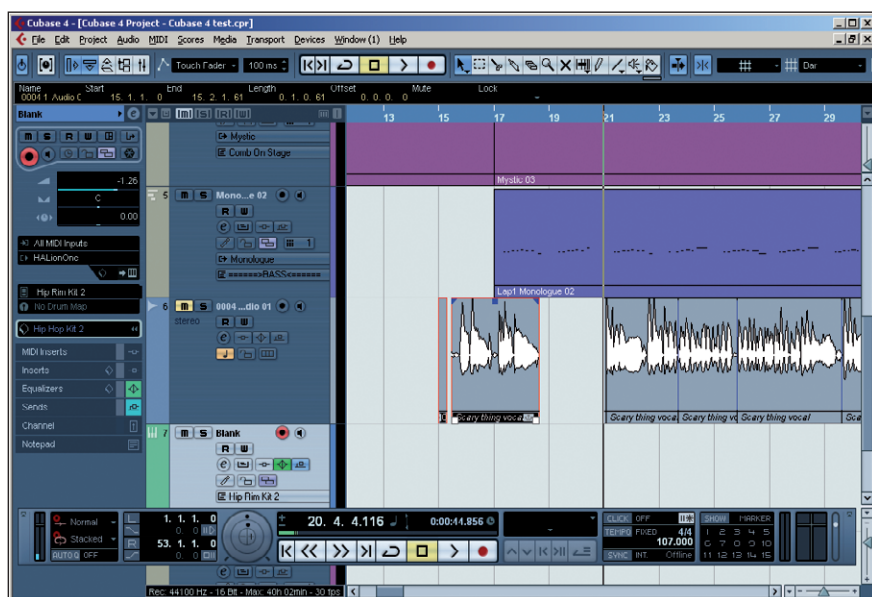
Brendan Stearn

A This is a common problem with music-production software, and only a few packages provide a sensible solution. The flagship Cubase and slightly more affordable Cubase Studio have an option called Grid Relative, which allows objects to be moved by whole bars (or smaller divisions) but

keep their position relative to the start of the bar. However, Grid Relative is sadly lacking from Cubase SE.

We can't think of a neat workaround. However, if you're prepared to put up with a bit of fiddling about, try this. Use the Draw tool to insert a short blank object directly before the audio recording. Enable snapping and move it to the beginning of the bar. Then select the object you've just created and the audio recording, and group them together by typing Ctrl-G. The blank audio object will now act as an anchor, so when you move both together the blank object will snap to the beginning of bars, maintaining the relative position of your recording. However, you'll need to be careful to click and drag the blank object and not the recording itself for this to work.

If you have overlapping audio recordings and no room on the timeline to insert additional blank objects, create a separate MIDI track especially for them. The process will still work in the same way. **BP**



▲ Adding a blank object at the beginning of the bar and grouping it with your recording can help you preserve the correct timing when moving things around

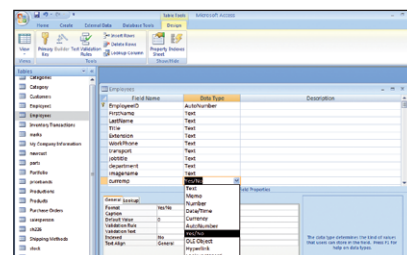
Should I keep old records in Access?

Q I have a database showing the training given to employees in my department. As the database has been used for several years, there are a lot of 'dead' records for ex-employees or people who've moved to other departments. I'd like to delete all these records, but my manager won't allow it. What do you recommend? I'd wondered about exporting the records for all the ex-employees to another database.

John Charlton

A I have to agree with your manager. One thing you'll learn as you work with databases is that it's never a good idea to get rid of data, because as soon as you do someone will want it. If you delete the records for all your ex-employees, you can bet that next week you'll be asked to produce a report showing how much money was spent on training employees who left in 2006, or three people will come back to your department and you'll need their old training records.

You could export the records, but there isn't really any need. Just add a column to show which employees are current and set the column type to Yes/No. If you want to, you can then export those records to a different table in the same database. However, you could just as easily set up a query that selects only employees where the CurrEmp column is True, and base all your reports and forms on that query rather than the underlying table. **KE**



▲ Use a Yes/No field to signify current employees and base your forms on a query to avoid selecting dormant records

Managing club members

Q I've an Access query that selects the data returned for a report. The data being selected is our rugby club membership, and members are entered in these categories: Seniors, Colts, Juniors, Mini and Ladies. I can select the correct records if I want to show one group, such as the Seniors, but sometimes I want to see all the club members.

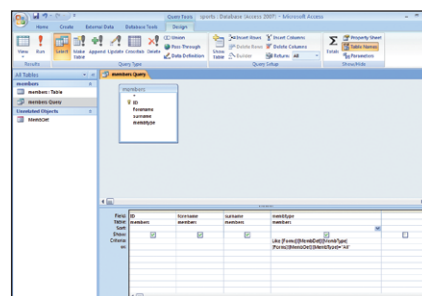
How would you suggest I select all the categories? The formula I'm currently using is: Like [Forms]![MembDet]![MembType].

Angus Bailey

A You need to remember that while a selection can look for a match, you can also enter a logical expression. Change the formula to this:

Like [Forms]![MembDet]![MembType] or [Forms]![MembDet]![MembType]="All"

In other words, you select the current record either if the membership type matches the control MembType on the MembDet form, or if the MembType on the MembDet form is set to All. **KE**



▲ You can look for all the team members in the selection formula

Adding a footer to a report

Q I've created a report in Access showing information that is organised by department. Each department starts on a new page, and the name of the department is shown using a text box. I also want to include the department name in the page footer, but I can't make this work.

I've tried using the same control source as I've used on the main page, but the names

don't appear in the right order. For example, the Sales department goes over two pages, and on the first page the footer shows Sales, but on the second page it changes to Technical, which is the next department on the report.

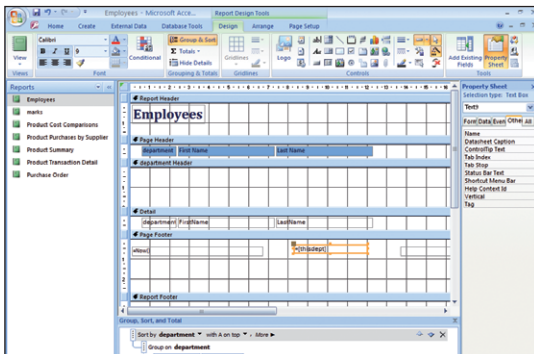
I have tried putting the control source of the text box in the footer to point to the department name on the main page, using:

`me.footer textbox = me.Department`

However, when I try this nothing appears at all in the footer text box. What am I doing wrong?

Ron Andrews

A You're almost there. Instead of trying to set the name programmatically, you need to set the control source on the report. So if the name of your text box in the detail part of the report is Department, set the control source of the text box to be `=Department`. **KE**



▲ Set the control source of the text box to point to the name of the text box on the report detail

Coloured bar charts

Q I have a bar chart in Excel that draws its data from a row of the workbook. Each bar represents a value in a cell in that row. My problem is that all the bars are the same colour and I want to make the colours different, even though it's all the same data series. However, if I change the colour for the series, all the bars have the same new colour.

Graham Peters

A There are two ways to do what you want. The easiest way is to change the chart so your data is plotted by columns, with each data point being a separate series. Right-click on the chart and then select Source Data. Then, from the dialog that appears, choose the Data Range tab. On this, set the Series In: option to be Columns. If you're using Excel 2007, your choices are Select Data, followed by Switch Row Column.

Alternatively, select the series and then choose Format, Options, making sure you choose the option to vary colour by point. **KE**

Specifying a page's word count

Q I'm creating a document where I've been asked to ensure that the text is shown double spaced, with no more than 24 lines per page and no more than 200 words per page. How can I do this other than spending a lot of time counting and adding blank lines?

B Cuthbertson

A There are two parts to what you need to do. Getting 24 lines per page is reasonably straightforward and involves setting the margins, checking headers and footers, and ensuring you've turned off widows and orphans.

You need to use margins to set the maximum page length. Start with a page size (usually A4 in the UK) that gives you a page length of 21cm across and 29.7cm down. If you then set top and bottom margins of 2cm, you're left with a working area 25.7cm long. If you choose the font and size of text that you have undoubtedly been told to use, there will be a maximum number of lines that can fit into that length of page. The text won't necessarily fill the entire page, as there may be room (in theory) for 24 1/3 lines (say), in which case only 24 lines will be shown on that page.

You then need to set the line spacing to be double, and fiddle until you get the margins set, so that with text without paragraphs you have the correct number of lines per page. In normal text, you wouldn't want to split a paragraph so you have only its first line alone at the end of one page (known as an orphan) or its last line alone at the top of the next page (a widow). Instead, the paragraph gets moved so you have sensible amounts appearing together. This can

cause problems if you are attempting to get the same number of lines on each page, so you need to choose Format, Paragraph and untick the Widow/orphan control box. You should also make sure that the 'Keep with next', 'Keep lines together' or 'Page break before' options are not ticked. Each of these choices could cause you problems.

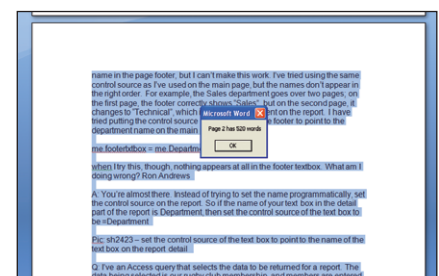
Next we can tackle the maximum number of words per page. This will depend on how many pages your document is going to have, and how often you're going to have to make changes that might alter the number of words that will be on a page. If your document is reasonably short – under 20 pages, for example – then we'd do the counting semi-manually. In other words, look at the document in Page Layout view, select all the text on each page in turn, and use Tools, Word Count to do a quick check that you are under the 200-word limit. If you are writing the next *War and Peace* and you don't want to do this manually on thousands of pages, the following macro will do the job of identifying any pages that have too many words:

```
Sub pagecount()  
Dim pagecount, i, thispage As  
Integer  
  
With ActiveDocument  
pagecount = Selection.Information  
(wdNumberOfPagesInDocument)  
For i = 1 To pagecount  
Selection.GoTo What:=wdGoToPage,  
Which:=wdGoToAbsolute, Count:=i  
ActiveDocument.Bookmarks("&Page").  
Range.Select  
thispage = Selection.Words.Count
```

```
If thispage > 200 Then  
MsgBox ("Page " & i & " has "  
& thispage & " words")  
End If  
Next i  
End With  
  
End Sub
```

It's quite tricky to find the number of words per page. You might think it would be a property of the Page object, but that's only really concerned with the layout of the document rather than the text that makes up the body of the document. Instead, you will need to use the Information property to find out how many pages the document contains, then use Selection.GoTo to move to the next page each time round the loop.

When you are on the correct page, you can use the Bookmarks item on the current page to select the current page each time round the loop. Once the page is selected, you'll be able to get the correct number of words using the Words.Count property. **KE**



▲ Check when you have too many words per page using the Words.Count property